

Open house and tour offered a glimpse at Facility

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In an open house which preceded the hearing, WATCH East Security Coordinator Patty Smith explained that there are already 50 beds in the building, so increasing capacity actually will not require any construction. If capacity is increased, the facility will hire an additional counselor, she stated.

The counseling staff currently consists of a clinic supervisor, two counselors, and two counselor technicians. Security personnel will not be increased, Smith said, as there are already at least two security members on duty at all times. On weekends when there are fewer members of the treatment staff at WATCH, there are three to four security people on duty.

There are currently 16 men and 22 women in treatment at the facility. Participants live two to three in a room, each of which has its own bathroom. There are separate men's and women's wings, each with day rooms for relaxation. The facility also includes a cafeteria, classrooms, and indoor and outdoor recreation areas.

The comprehensive six-month program is more effective than the typical 20-day program, Smith said, noting that many WATCH participants have already been through other, shorter programs. One current participant echoed her sentiments, saying, "I've been there, and now I'm here."

Clients at WATCH East have the opportunity to take classes for college credit or to obtain a GED. Instructors from Dawson Community College teach a life skills class and six workshop classes that earn participating clients certificates in Career Development and Life Management. Smith feels those classes give participants the skills and confidence they need to re-integrate into communities after treatment.

Other area groups, including Dawson County Domestic Violence and local ministers, also provide support to the program.